

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 846

By Miller L

A RESOLUTION to honor and commend Oprah Winfrey for her myriad contributions to society.

WHEREAS, it is fitting that this General Assembly specially recognize those estimable citizens whose dedication to improving the quality of life for all people has greatly impacted this State, our Nation, and the world; and

WHEREAS, one such admirable individual is Ms. Oprah Winfrey, who has overcome countless hardships and adversity to achieve tremendous success and aspire to "transform people's lives"; and

WHEREAS, born in Kosciusko, Mississippi to Vernon Winfrey and Vernita Lee on January 29, 1954, Ms. Winfrey spent the early years of her childhood with her grandparents, Hattie Mae and Earless Lee in Milwaukee; she spent a short amount of time thereafter with her mother before going to live with her father in Nashville, Tennessee; and

WHEREAS, Ms. Winfrey spent only a year in Nashville with Vernon Winfrey before returning to her mother in Milwaukee, where she would endure many hardships; and

WHEREAS, learning the importance of faith from her grandmother who told her "the strong have got to take care of the others," Ms. Winfrey drew inspiration from Romans 15:1, "We that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak," and even at the young age of four, knew that she had a "higher calling"; and

WHEREAS, after returning to live in Nashville with her father, Ms. Winfrey became very active in church and began to speak at various churches throughout the community; and

WHEREAS, in 1971, Ms. Winfrey won the Miss Black Tennessee Pageant and also became the first African-American female to become Miss Fire Prevention, an experience which led to the beginning of her career of "perpetuating the truth" through journalism and broadcasting; and



WHEREAS, when collecting her Miss Fire Prevention contest prizes, a young Ms. Winfrey, only a high school student, impressed the staff and manager of WVOL radio with her confidence and speaking abilities and she began to work after school as a part-time news announcer; and

WHEREAS, Ms. Winfrey furthered her education and obtained her degree in Speech, Communications and Performing Arts from Tennessee State University; she later established the "Vernon Winfrey Scholars Program" at TSU in honor of her father; and

WHEREAS, during her time at TSU, Ms. Winfrey, at the age of 19, became the youngest and first African-American woman to anchor the news at Nashville's WTVF NewsChannel 5; and

WHEREAS, she then transferred to Baltimore's WJZ-TV to co-anchor the *Six o'clock News* and quickly moved up the ranks to become the co-host of their local talk show, *People Are Talking*; and

WHEREAS, in 1984, Ms. Winfrey moved to Chicago to host WLS-TV's morning talk show, *AM Chicago*, which soon became the number one talk show, within a year the show was expanded to an hour-long program and renamed, *The Oprah Winfrey Show*; the show entered national syndication in 1986; and

WHEREAS, Ms. Winfrey now both produces and hosts the highly successful *Oprah Winfrey Show*; this "number one talk show" has an estimated 23 million viewers per week, is broadcast internationally in 107 countries, and is the highest-rated talk show in television history; and

WHEREAS, in addition to her television success, which has been accompanied by numerous awards and honors, Ms. Winfrey has established herself as a talented actress, starring in many acclaimed films; an astute business woman who has been successful as a producer and creator, magazine founder and editorial director of *O, the Oprah Magazine*, and co-founder of Oxygen Media; and as an educator, acting as an adjunct professor at the J.L. Kellogg Graduate School of Management at Northwestern University; and

WHEREAS, Ms. Winfrey is a well-known philanthropist and humanitarian who has worked assiduously to improve life for people in various ways; she founded the Oprah Winfrey

Foundation to support the inspiration, empowerment, education, and well-being of women, children, and families around the world; and

WHEREAS, through this private charity, Ms. Winfrey has awarded grants to organizations to carry out her vision and established "The Oprah Winfrey Scholars Program" which awards scholarships to students who are determined to use their education to give back to their communities; and

WHEREAS, Ms. Winfrey pioneered the initiative, ChristmasKindness South Africa 2002, which included visits to orphanages and rural schools in South Africa, giving food, clothing, shoes, school supplies, books, and toys to the children, and in 2003 established libraries and teacher education programs in 63 schools; Ms. Winfrey has also announced a partnership with South Africa's Ministry of Education to build a model leadership school for girls, The Oprah Winfrey Leadership Academy, which is scheduled to open in 2006; and

WHEREAS, committed to providing quality education, Ms. Winfrey is a spokesperson for A Better Chance, an organization that provides academically talented high school students of color, predominantly from inner city school districts, the opportunity to attend many of the nation's finest college preparatory schools; and

WHEREAS, her concerns for the youth of America led Ms. Winfrey to champion the National Child Protection Act by testifying before the U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee to establish a national database of convicted child abusers; President Clinton signed the national "Oprah Bill" into law on December 20, 1993; and

WHEREAS, through her meritorious contributions to society and both her personal and professional success, Ms. Winfrey has warranted herself as an outstanding citizen whose perseverance and spirit of community serve as a paradigm for all, and she should be specially recognized; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED THIRD GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, that we honor and commend Oprah Winfrey for her myriad contributions to society, noting her laudable service to the State of Tennessee, and wish her the very best in all her future endeavors.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy